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SUBJECT: MALAYSIA - U.S. COAST GUARD COOPERATION ADVANCES

REF: 07 KL 1720

#### Summary and Comment

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**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: Embassy Kuala Lumpur is using its USD 1 million in NDAA Title 1207 funding to achieve three mission objectives: to establish a durable, long-term relationship between the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA); to support the MMEA - as a new institution - in achieving its organizational development goals; and to improve maritime law enforcement capacity to counter terrorism and transnational crime in the tri-border region (reftel). These priorities shaped the recent visits to Malaysia of a USCG assessment team and to the United States of an MMEA delegation led by the head of the organization, Director General Admiral Datuk Amdan bin Kurish. The USCG Commandant Admiral Thad Allen met October 20 with Admiral Amdan at USCG headquarters in Washington, DC.

The admirals agreed to sign a letter of intent, establishing a new MMEA/USCG relationship and describing areas of mutual cooperation. The MMEA delegation also spent one day visiting the USCG training center in Yorktown, Virginia and one in briefings at the headquarters of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). These high-level USCG and NCIS meetings mark a transition from a period of extensive preparation and planning to one of sustained engagement focused on capacity building and institutional development.

**¶2.** (SBU) Comment: The MMEA's visit to the U.S., while compressed, was successful on numerous levels. It solidified leadership's support for long-term cooperation between the MMEA and its U.S. counterparts. It demonstrated for the MMEA delegation an array of capabilities - both technological and organizational - that can be used to meet the requirements of the MMEA. It displayed for MMEA leadership a number of approaches to organizational development, training, and interagency coordination, which are employed by its U.S. counterparts. Finally, the visit provided Admiral Amdan with a number of ideas about how to enhance the MMEA's leadership in promoting regional cooperation by tapping USCG international programs. End Summary and Comment.

#### Preparations

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**¶3.** (SBU) Using its Title 1207 program, designed to improve the maritime law enforcement capacity of the MMEA in the tri-border region, Embassy Kuala Lumpur has sought to achieve

a long-held mission objective of forging an enduring relationship between the MMEA and the USCG. Over the past year, the Embassy has met extensively with the Malaysian National Security Council to secure high-level buy-in to USCG-MMEA engagement. On March 13, 2008 the USCG Office of International Affairs sent a representative to meet with Embassy KL and the MMEA to discuss overall parameters for capacity building. The USCG developed a training plan responsive to the needs identified by the MMEA and on that basis established an Inter-Agency Agreement to transfer 1207 funds from State to USCG.

¶4. (SBU) When the MMEA named Admiral Amdan as its new Director General over the summer, the Embassy sought to encourage him to work with the USCG. On September 23, Deputy Chief of Mission Rapson met with Admiral Amdan to underscore the Embassy's strong message of support and to introduce the Admiral to the head of the USCG's training assessment team. During the meeting, Admiral Amdan signaled his desire to model the MMEA on the USCG, with its high standards of professionalism and trademark ability to work effectively within an interagency environment. Amdan said he viewed capacity building under 1207 as an opportunity for the MMEA to tailor training to the development needs of the organization, taking into account operational priorities and the young organization's absorptive capacity. He added that he saw 1207 as a fruitful way to integrate domain awareness and interdiction capabilities with those systems being introduced in Sabah under Title 1206 funding.

¶5. (SBU) Admiral Amdan noted that annually the MMEA accesses  
KUALA LUMP 00001003 002 OF 004

60-70 new cadets as well as some 200 non-commissioned officers. In subsequent discussions, Amdan pointed out that the MMEA intends to fill its staffing gap of more than 1,000 billets by 2011 and plans to propose a long-term budget, which envisions increasing the staffing of the organization by an additional 2,000 to 6,000 total billets. Both the near-term and longer-term targets will require stepped up hiring and training on the part of the MMEA.

¶6. (SBU) The assessment team, led by the USCG Office of International Affairs, included the USCG's Liaison to the Pacific Fleet as well as an NCIS special agent and two Embassy officers responsible for overall coordination and implementation of the 1207 program. The team met with MMEA officers at headquarters as well as in East Malaysia. During these meetings, the MMEA leadership made clear the dual nature of its interest in engaging with the USCG: on the one hand, the MMEA wants to benefit from USCG guidance as it seeks to develop as a new organization; on the other, the MMEA wants to achieve measurable operational and skill-building outcomes as a result of the training iterations received. Over the course of the assessment team's visit, it was agreed that the 1207 training, because it must be focused on the tri-border region, would usefully serve as a test case from which lessons could be drawn and assessed for their application to the MMEA more broadly.

Two Coast Guards, Head to Head

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¶7. (SBU) The visit by the MMEA to the U.S. was jointly organized by the USCG Office of International Affairs, NCIS Singapore Field Office and the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. It was funded using 1207 and regional funds. The MMEA delegation was led by the Director General Admiral Amdan and included Datin Siti Zawiyah, Captain Nasir (Director of Strategic Planning), Commander Robert (Training), Mr. Syamsul (Human Resources), and Commander Saiful (DG's Special Officer). The program included a day at USCG headquarters; one at the USCG's Yorktown, Virginia Training Center; and a third at NCIS headquarters. In the meeting of the two coast guard heads, USCG Commandant Admiral Allen warmly welcomed MMEA DG Admiral Amdan and his delegation. Allen offered to

sign a letter of intent (LOI) with his MMEA counterpart, and Amdan enthusiastically concurred. Allen highlighted on a map of Malaysia the importance of the tri-border region, stating that the tri-border region was where the USCG planned to engage with the MMEA with its capacity building efforts. Allen noted the Coast Guard's eagerness to increase its partnerships to promote stability in the Southeast Asia region and the importance of regional forums focused on common maritime security interests.

**¶8.** (SBU) Admiral Amdan acknowledged the importance of international forums, underscoring the utility of the recent ASEAN heads of coast guard meeting in the Philippines. Amdan signaled Malaysia's support for the proposal - tabled at the last meeting - that the USCG be granted observer status in future forums. Allen said the USCG was learning much from Southeast Asia regarding the necessity of mutual assistance. In subsequent discussions, Amdan noted with pride the collaborative mechanisms in place in the Straits of Malacca and expressed his vision to gradually develop the MMEA's role as a proponent of international cooperation. Amdan suggested that, given adequate time to lay the groundwork with his counterparts from neighboring coast guards, the MMEA might eventually be interested in exploring opportunities to engage in joint training or study tours. He acknowledged that 1207 training, scheduled to begin in East Malaysia, would need to move into the tri-border region and could -- potentially and with the right preparation -- fruitfully involve personnel from neighboring countries.

**¶9.** (SBU) While at USCG headquarters, the MMEA delegation received briefings on search and rescue (SAR), maritime law enforcement (MLE), and maritime domain awareness (MDA). The MMEA delegation expressed particular interest in international cooperation on SAR, noting a willingness to include Indonesia and the Philippines in an agreement on SAR preparedness. Regarding MLE, the MMEA delegation focused on

KUALA LUMP 00001003 003 OF 004

how USCG handled illegal immigration cases and what criteria could be used in a porous border environment to establish whether certain groups of individuals were intending immigrants. USCG briefers outlined various UN protocols as well as specific maritime operations protocols, established between bordering countries in advance for handling illegal immigration cases. In conjunction with briefings on MDA, the MMEA delegation was struck by the enormous amount of information sharing that was required to achieve a common operating picture and to usefully exploit domain awareness in an international and interagency environment. Admiral Amdan suggested that the political mechanisms might not yet be in place to provide the robust coordination needed to ensure a similar level of information sharing. He did, however, point to significant advances made in adopting a government-wide radio network as a common platform across Malaysian government agencies.

Yorktown Training Center

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**¶10.** (SBU) On October 21, the MMEA delegation was introduced to the USCG's Yorktown Training Center through briefings and guided tours of the facilities. Briefings focused on the overall mission of the training center, the international training division, marine safety, boat handling, and search and rescue training. Discussion centered on enlisted and officer accession programs and how much to focus on general versus specific training. Admiral Amdan mentioned that the MMEA will continue to rely on the Navy for basic training of MMEA personnel until the MMEA's Kuantan training facility is completed in 2010. The group toured the engineering and boat forces schools. The MMEA delegation was particularly interested in the mooring facilities used by the boat school.

The floating dock - which is based on a modular design originally used for jet skis - was considered by the delegation as a potentially cost-effective solution to MMEA's

critical moorage shortages.

NCIS

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¶11. (SBU) The MMEA delegation spent the final day of its visit at the headquarters of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, where it received a range of briefings and toured the NCIS operations center. As the MMEA has an investigative and prosecutorial function, the delegation took a keen interest in briefings on the NCIS's background and mission; forensics/crime scene management; and the FBI's Maritime Security Program/Maritime Liaison Agent Program. NCIS leadership expressed its eagerness to provide the MMEA with training in investigation techniques in coordination with planned USCG courses. The delegation, again, was struck by the degree of information sharing and interagency cooperation required to prosecute complex criminal cases in the maritime domain. Admiral Amdan noted that he will have to work with his counterparts in the Malaysian police to establish the appropriate division of labor between the MMEA's investigative authority and that of the police Criminal Investigations Division. The Admiral also noted that, because Malaysia has not adopted international laws against piracy, the MMEA is unable to prosecute piracy violations.

Visit Outcomes

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Among the next steps agreed to be undertaken as a result of the visits were:

- a Letter of Intent to be signed by Admirals Allen and Amdan outlining areas of USCG-MMEA cooperation;
- a training program sending a USCG-led team to Malaysia every other month;
- recognition by both Admirals that training should be conducted in the tri-border region;
- MMEA support for USCG request to have observer status at ASEAN meeting of Coast Guard heads;
- USCG to provide via Embassy KL electronic copies of detailed briefings to MMEA;
- MMEA to assess utility of floating dock technology for use

KUALA LUMP 00001003 004 OF 004

in Malaysia;

- NCIS to provide crime scene investigation/forensics training within USCG-led program.

1207 Tri-border Capacity Building

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¶12. (SBU) As a result of the visit by the USCG assessment team in September, a training sequence was established with the MMEA to provide for the dispatch of one USCG-led mobile training team to Malaysia every other month. Embassy Kuala Lumpur and MMEA appreciate USCG's efforts to maximize the continuity among trainers, by scheduling, to the extent possible, training teams with prior Malaysia experience. The first 1207-funded training began as scheduled November 10 and focuses on training MMEA boarding officers from throughout the tri-border region in maritime law enforcement. NCIS special agents and forensics experts are contributing a module on crime scene management and forensics. The initial training is being conducted off the coast of Sabah, in Labuan. Both DCM Rapson and COMDT Admiral Allen have raised directly with Admiral Amdan the importance of training in the tri-border region, and Embassy staff have discussed the matter repeatedly with the Malaysian NSC. When asked specifically about the matter of shifting training from Labuan to the tri-border, Admiral Amdan acknowledged that the training would be moved there. He did not, however, commit to a date certain for doing so. The Embassy's American Presence Officer, who has responsibility for East Malaysia, is working with the training teams and local MMEA officials

to help ensure the training achieves desired outcomes. Embassy KL will work with the training teams to benchmark these outcomes and with MMEA and USCG headquarters to link these benchmarks to the wider organizational development needs of the MMEA.

KEITH